



Volume 2. Issue 44.

## Mishenichnas Av, Mema'atin Besimcha

There is a famous *Mishnah* that is cited towards the end of *Masechet Ta'anit* (4:6) that states:

“*Mishenichnas Av, Mema'atin Besimcha*”

“When the month of Av arrives, we decrease our happiness”.

The reason for this is because the month of Av is known to be a difficult time for the Jewish people as seen throughout history; a time when many different calamities befell the Jewish people.<sup>1</sup> We understand that we must decrease our happiness during this time; however, we are unsure of how this can be achieved on a practical level.

The *Gemara* in *Yevamot* (43a) states a few practical things that demonstrate examples of decreasing joy. These include decreasing one's business endeavours (i.e. commerce, trade) and refraining from building and planting during the month of Av.

The *Rambam* (*Hilchot Taanit* 5:6) when codifying this *Halacha* states that “when the month of Av arrives we decrease our happiness...It is forbidden to cut hair, to launder clothes and to wear clean clothes”. Based on this, the *Lechem Mishneh* asks: Why did the *Rambam* not quote the *Gemara* in *Yevamot* that spoke about limiting business activities? The *Lechem Mishneh* answers that the *Rambam* saw the decrease in business activities only as a *midat chasidut*, and not as a *Halacha* and therefore he did not list it in the activities that one must undertake in order to decrease their joy during the month of Av.

It is interesting to note that the *Rambam* states this ‘decrease’ of joy during the month of Av as *Halacha*. Contrastingly, the *Tosfot* in *Megillah* (5b) state that during the month of Av we are not allowed to be joyous **at all** (i.e. an *issur* of being joyous) and consequently the *Magen Avraham* brings this down as *Halacha*.

It seems from the wording of the *Rambam* that he does not hold there is an ‘*issur*’ of being joyous; rather he says we must decrease or limit our joy. However, this is

a difficult opinion, as the limits or boundaries of this *Halacha* are vague. Additionally, the *Gemara* in *Yevamos* is also hard to understand, for it only states instances which cause a decrease in joy, and does not state explicitly that a person is obligated to decrease in happiness with the arrival of Av.

Rav Soloveitchik<sup>2</sup> suggests a novel idea to answer these questions. The Rav states that there is a halachic distinction between the days following *Rosh Chodesh Av*, and the days of the week of *Tisha B'Av*. During the days of the week of *Tisha B'Av*, there are a number of activities that are forbidden (cleaning clothes, getting a hair cut) due to Bnei Yisrael being in a state of *Aveilut*. However, during the days following *Rosh Chodesh Av*, none of these activities are forbidden; the only *din* that applies in these days is that of ‘decreasing in joy’. This decrease in joy is a *chiyuv* of *aveilut* which is not connected to specific actions, rather connected to internal feelings and *kavanot* (*aveilut shebalev*-‘*aveilut* of the heart’). Thus, the only actions connected to *aveilut* which are to be done (or not to be done) during these days, are those that will cause a person to feel this *aveilut shebalev*. This feeling is subjective and is dependent on the *minhag* of the nation at a specific time and place.

Therefore, in the *Gemara* in *Yevamot*, the way to decrease in joy and feel *aveilut shebalev* was by decreasing business activities. However, the *Gemara* (and also the *Rambam*) did not rule that a person was obligated to decrease his joy in this manner - as those actions were specific for the *minhag* of that time and place.

This is the reason that the *Rambam* too, did not list that decreasing business activities is one of the ways to decrease joy in Av. Specifically decreasing business activities is not the *issur* that must be dealt with in order to decrease joy. Rather, the way to decrease joy can come about through many different ways - each way specific to the *minhag* of the nation at the time.<sup>3</sup>

**Yehuda Gottlieb**

<sup>1</sup> See *Mishnah Ta'anit* (4:6) for the five events that occurred to the Jewish people on the ninth of Av during history.

<sup>2</sup> *Harerei Kedem* (136)

<sup>3</sup> The Rav suggests that in our times we decrease our *simcha* by not consuming meat and wine during the first nine days of Av.

**Revision Questions**

טעניט ד' ה' – ח'

- How many dates were fixed for the *korban eitzim*? (ד': ה')
- What were the five things that occurred on the seventeenth of *Tamuz*? (ד': ו')
- What were the five things that occurred on the ninth of *Av*? (ד': ו')
- What two things are prohibited the week of *Tisha B'Av*? (ד': ו')
- What is one prohibited from eating on the day before *Tisha B'Av*? (ד': ו')
- On which two dates had events occurred that were the greatest for *Am Yisrael*? (What occurred on these dates?) (ד': ח')
- Explained what occurred on *Tu B'Av*? (ד': ח')

מגילה א' – א' – י'

- On which dates during *Adar* is it possible for the *megillah* to be read? (א': א')
- Explain how it is possible for the *megillah* to be read on different days? (ב': א')
- What is the definition of a “big city” and why is this important? (ג': א')
- Which four events are delayed if they coincide with *Shabbat*? (ג': א')
- What is different about a day on which the *megillah* is read early and *Purim*? (ג': א')
- What is the law if they read the *megillah* during *Adar* and then the year was turned into a leap year – do they read the *megillah* again in *Adar Sheni*? (ד': א')
- What is the difference between:
  - *Adar Rishon* and *Adar Sheni*? (ד': א')
  - *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov* with respect to the prohibition of performing *melacha*? (ה': א')
  - *Shabbat* and *Yom Kippur* with respect to the prohibition of performing *melacha*? (ה': א')
  - A person that vows against gaining any benefit from his friend and a person that vows against gaining any food-related benefit from his friend? (ו': א')
  - A *neder* and *nedava*? (ו': א')
  - A *zav* of two and three sightings? (ו': א')
  - A *metzora musgar* and a *metzora muchlat*? (ו': א')
  - A *metzora* that becomes *tahor* from being a *musgar* and *muchlat*? (ו': א')
  - *Sefarim (Tanach)* and *tefillin* and *mezuzot*? (ז': א')
  - A *kohen gadol* anointed with the anointing oil and a *kohen gadol* inaugurated by wearing the required clothing? (ז': א')
  - A *kohen gadol* and a ‘past’ *kohen gadol* that served having been a deputy? (ז': א')
  - *Bamah gedolah* and a *bamah ketanah*? (ח': א')

[www.mishnahyomit.com](http://www.mishnahyomit.com)

**Local Shiurim**

**Sunday -Thursday**  
Between mincha & ma'ariv  
Mizrachi Shul

**Friday & Shabbat**  
10 minutes before mincha  
Mizrachi Shul

**Audio Shiurim on-line!**

- [613.org/mishnah.html](http://613.org/mishnah.html)
- [www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/](http://www.shemayisrael.com/mishna/)

**5**  
**WEEKS TO GO**  
**TILL**

**SIYUM**  
**SEDER MOED**

*Seder Nashim*  
*is calling you!*

**Next Week's Mishnayot...**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	שבת קודש
2 <sup>nd</sup> July ו' תמוז	3 <sup>rd</sup> July ז' תמוז	4 <sup>th</sup> July ח' תמוז	5 <sup>th</sup> July ט' תמוז	6 <sup>th</sup> June י' תמוז	7 <sup>th</sup> June י"א תמוז	8 <sup>th</sup> July י"ב תמוז
Megillah 1:11-2:1	Megillah 2:2-3	Megillah 2:4-5	Megillah 2:6-3:1	Megillah 3:2-3	Megillah 3:4-5	Megillah 3:6-4:1

